Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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Twenty-eight Bureau of Indian Affairs schools in four states will officially become on-ramps to the information superhighway this Saturday, May 16, 1998. Access Native America Net Day will officially move Indian schools in Arizona, New Mexico, South Dakota, and Mississippi on-line and provide the students of these schools with access to the Internet through the Department of the Interior's network.

Celebrations are planned at all the schools with major event sites located at one school in each state. The Cottonwood School in Chinle, Arizona, will serve as the event site for the Navajo Nation; Jemez Pueblo Day School will serve New Mexico; Little Wound School in Kyle, South Dakota, will serve the Oglala Lakota Nation on the Pine Ridge Reservation; and the Red Water School in Carthage, Mississippi, will serve the Mississippi Choctaw Nation. Events will include cultural performances by students, presentations from members of the Net Day Planning Team, and an on-line event from the four schools. A show-and-tell of the web sites created by the students at all of the newly connected schools will be featured.

Many of the schools served by the Bureau of Indian Affairs are located in rural, impoverished areas where access to telephone lines and computers is limited by distance, poverty, and a lack of service that most Americans take for granted. "This is why it is so important we provide the technology of the 21st century to these children," said Kevin Gover, Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs. "Our children do not have the same opportunities to take field trips to museums, zoos, or libraries. The Internet, and projects like Access Native America Net Day, bring the museums, the zoos, and libraries to Indian children."

Access to the Internet for students in Indian schools will broaden their horizons with instant links to all of the information on the Internet while also serving a strong social purpose. From the Internet, they will be able to communicate with other Indian children who may be experiencing similar problems. Peter Camp, an education specialist in the Office of Indian Education Programs and a Net Day coordinator, explains the importance of the Internet on isolated reservations: "If our kids are to participate in society they have to have the technology. Its absolutely critical. Indian children often are gripped by the feeling of isolation, that they are the only Indians left. With the creation of web pages and links between the schools, the kids are learning more about other Indian children, and gaining a new sense of hope. There is a definite lack of coverage of modem Indian issues, and this can help our kids know they are not alone," said Camp. Access Native America Net Day is a public-private collaboration between the Bureau of Indian Affairs and corporate and foundation sponsors including Intel, Microsoft, Toshiba, UPS, Los Alamos National Laboratories, and foundations like the Annenberg Rural Challenge, and the One 2 One Indigenous Learning Center.

Through the cooperation of these entities and the participation of programs such as Students Recycling Used Technology, the computers and training for their use were provided for the students involved in Net Day activities. Through the cooperation and generosity of these corporate and foundation sponsors more than a million dollars in hardware and software has been donated. Through the StRUT program, students at the Santa Fe Indian School, with the guidance and training supplied by the Los Alamos National Laboratories and Intel, built computers used by the Access Native America Net Day program. To help the newly networked schools maximize their connections Microsoft Corp. donated software and

training resources to the Access Native America Net Day schools. Each school received FrontPage' 98, Microsoft's Web site creation and management tool: Internet solutions for K-12 CD, a comprehensive set of industry-leading tools and resources designed to enhance school and classroom Internet connections, training guides, including In and Out of the Classroom with FrontPage' 98, self-guided lessons to make it easy to use FrontPage as a classroom tool; and Microsoft's full Academic Training Pack, which contains training materials for educators that cover a range of technology solutions for schools. In addition through its work with StRUT Microsoft is providing Windows 95 and Microsoft Office 97 for the schools.

"Microsoft's support of Native American Net Day is part of our continuing effort to build a global Connected Learning Community, where all students have access to technology and the tools that support learning today and for a lifetime," said Kathryn Yates, director of Microsoft K-12 programs. "We are pleased to be a part of the community that is helping connect the students in these rural Native American schools to the vast resources of the Internet."

"Access Native America Net Day is already a success, but it is only a first step," said Assistant Secretary Gover. "The goal of the Bureau of Indian Affairs is to connect all 185 BIA operated schools to the Internet by the year 2000. Work on Net Day 99 begins next Monday. Our children are the national treasures of the Tribes, and the Internet is too important to their future for them to be left behind."
